

Amateurs in Action

Recounts of ham radio operators who have used their time and skills to help others in a time of need



The Chilean rescue

On 09 July 2020, an aircraft departed Santiago, Chile, to perform an air ambulance service and pick up a patient on Easter Island. About a thousand nautical miles out, the plane lost contact with the control tower back on the continent, so the pilot called out on the Peruvian Relief Net (PRN) channel at 7.100 MHz.

An emergency simulation training exercise had just concluded on the PRN a few minutes earlier, and two operators, Guillermo Guerra OA4DTU and Giancarlo Passalacqua OA4DSN, were still on frequency, chatting, when they heard the distress call from the pilot. Guillermo answered the call, and the pilot began detailing the situation, including the fact that the plane had lost satellite communication, and requested support from Ocean Air Control (OAC) of Chile, since the HF equipment on Easter Island was in disrepair at the moment.



Guillermo Guerra OA4DTU



By means of relays through Guillermo and about ten phone calls, the OAC was able to determine the precise location and path of the plane, and communicate that back to the pilot. These relays continued until the pilot reported making VHF contact with the Easter Island control tower, confirming

a safe descent and landing.

Soon after landing, the pilot called Guillermo on the phone, then sent him a photo of the aircraft on the rainy Mataveri runway while it was awaiting patient delivery. Soon, the plane was off again, to Santiago airport, where a ground ambulance awaited the patient.

The ordeal lasted about three hours, with Guillermo, the key relay, remaining at his home rig the entire time. Later, the OAC commended Guillermo and the PRN for their handling of [the incident](#).

— Reported by Radio Club Peruano, OA4O

